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# *Historical Events*

## *Zion Lutheran Church*

*Harrisburg, Pa.*

1787-1947

SOUTH FOURTH STREET, NEAR MARKET STREET  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA





# Important Dates In Zion

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## Pastors of Zion Church

1. Henry Moeller, 1795-1803.
2. John D. Peterson, April 1803-1812.
3. Frederick C. Schaeffer, November 1812-June 1815.
4. George Lochman, August 20, 1815-July 10, 1826 (Time of his death).
5. Augustus H. Lochman, April 2, 1827-February 17, 1836.
6. Samuel Sprecher, June 6, 1836-November 1840.
7. Charles W. Schaeffer, July 1841-June 1849.
8. Charles A. Hay, July 8, 1849-September 4, 1865.
9. George F. Stelling, December 21, 1865-July 1, 1875.
10. Joel Swartz, September 1875-1880.
11. Albert H. Studebaker, February 1881-November 1886.
12. David M. Gilbert, December 1, 1887-1905.
13. S. Winfield Herman, January 1, 1906-December 16, 1947 (Time of his death).



# *Important Dates In Zion*

- 1787—First church building erected, occupied by Lutheran and Reformed re-nominations.
- 1795—Distinctive denominational life begun.
- 1813—Present site of church purchased.
- 1814—June 22. Corner stone laid.
- 1815—October 1. Dedication of new church.
- 1816—Sold interest in old church to Salem Reformed Church.
- 1818—Organ purchased.
- 1819—September 1. First Church school in Harrisburg organized.
- 1822—A separate two-story building erected for parochial school.
- 1829—Steeple erected and bell placed therein.
- 1836—Congregation became independent and self-supporting.
- 1838—October 21. Church building destroyed by fire.
- 1838—October 22. Vestry determined to rebuild on old site.
- 1839—National Whig Convention held in unconsecrated building and nominated William Henry Harrison for president and John Tyler for vice-president of the United States.
- 1839—November 10. New church dedicated.
- 1843—January 8. St. Michael's German Church organized.
- 1860—September 13. Second (Messiah) Church organized.
- 1867—Mission Sunday School (Memorial Church) started.
- 1868—Church remodeled. New organ and chimes purchased.
- 1875—February. Mission Sunday School (Bethlehem Church) organized.
- 1886—July. Property of Memorial Church conveyed to it for the sum of \$1.
- 1889—November 11. Trinity Mission started.
- 1892—Chapel of Zion dedicated.
- 1895—Celebration, 100th Anniversary of separate organization of Zion.
- 1906—Sunday School room renovated.
- 1906—October 14. Memorial tablet in memory of Rev. D. M. Gilbert, D. D., unveiled.
- 1907—Joint celebration, 120th Anniversary of Founding of First Church in Harrisburg.
- 1910—D. M. Gilbert Foreign Mission Endowment Fund of \$2,000 was established to support a native missionary in India.
- 1912—St. Matthew's became Home Mission and Church Extension project of Zion.
- 1913—Organ rebuilt at cost of \$3,500.
- 1914—Extensive improvements begun. Church House, Memorial Windows, Etc.
- 1915—Parsonage purchased and remodeled at 212 Pine Street.
- 1915—Adoption of Proposed Constitution of United Lutheran Church in America.
- 1916—Church House erected and church remodeled.
- 1922—Parsonage purchased and remodeled at 121 State Street.
- 1930—Extensive improvement in Sunday School rooms.
- 1937—Celebration 150th Anniversary First Church in Harrisburg.
- 1939—Two properties adjacent to the church given as a memorial to Dr. Croll Keller.
- 1945—Celebration, 150th Anniversary of separate organization of Zion. Raising of \$100,000 Expansion Fund.
- 1946—New Organ placed at cost of \$48,000.
- 1947—160th Anniversary of Founding of First Church in Harrisburg.







Zion Lutheran Church With the Proposed  
Dr. Croll Keller Memorial Annex.





## *Early History*

A history of Zion Lutheran Church would not be complete without the inclusion of some records of the early background of Harrisburg and its founder.

On the 17th and 19th days of December 1733, John Harris, an English trader who had settled in the vicinity as early as 1705, secured from the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania patents for some 800 acres of land, parts of which and on lands adjacent, there has risen the City of Harrisburg.

Upon the death of his father in December 1748, John Harris the second, at the age of 22 years, inherited the portion of the estate in which we are interested. The period from 1748 to the time of his death on July 29, 1791, covered an important period in Pennsylvania history.

John Harris II was described as an energetic, public spirited, courageous, and patriotic man who deservedly occupied a prominent place and exerted considerable influence among the men of his day.

The settlement was long known as Harris' Ferry, the ferry right not being formally granted, however, until 1753. The neighborhood grew and in 1784 Mr. Harris took steps to found a town. In 1785 the new County of Dauphin was formed, and in the same year, in fulfilment of a proposition made to the General Assembly, a town was laid out at the county seat and named Harrisburg by its founder, as was thought to be his right.

Within two years after the laying out of its streets and lanes the town consisted of about a hundred houses and the population numbered some 600 souls. But there was, especially for the considerable proportion of German residents of the village, no place of worship within easy access. Prior to 1787 the Christian people of Harrisburg enjoyed only such irregular and occasional public religious services as might be obtained from visiting ministers, their assemblies for worship being in some instances in the open air under shelter of the trees, but usually in a small log school house which stood on the northeast corner of Third and Walnut Streets.

Feeling the need of better facilities and greater privileges in this regard, on March 12, 1787, a subscription was opened to procure funds for the erection of a church. The subscribers were largely Germans, members of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, although others





First Church 1787

were granted certain privileges in it. The building which resulted from this effort was jointly owned and steadily occupied by the people of these two communions.

This first church in Harrisburg, built of logs, was erected in 1787, on lot No. 187, at the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets, which was donated for the purpose with certain reservations by Mr. Harris. After his death in 1791 his heirs released all their interest in it to the Trustees of the Lutheran and Reformed congregations for the sum of five shillings.

The primitive sanctuary stood on the rear of the lot, having a front of 35 feet 5 inches on Third Street, and 30 feet 5 inches along Cherry Alley. Certain changes were made as the means and membership increased. In 1804 it was greatly transformed by the erection of a pulpit, the putting up of galleries on three sides, and the plastering of the walls. A wide aisle extended from the large double front door to similar doors in the rear. In the aisle stood a large ten-plate stove with a full supply of drums and pipes which provided ample heat. Against the rear wall stood the pulpit supported by a wooden column still extant and preserved as a relic by a member of the Reformed Church. The collection was taken in black velvet bags that were fastened to long poles, and which hung by the back door close to the pulpit.





The two congregations had worshipped in this building for about eight years, one minister preaching to both, when they decided to hold separate services although in the same building.

Of the pastors who ministered in this first place of worship the name of the Rev. Frederick David Schaeffer appears in his own handwriting in 1788 as pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation in and about Harrisburg. He began the record book of the two congregations using the church in common, and his name is placed as first pastor by the Rev. A. Hautz, of the Reformed Church, who came next and was the first resident minister of the town. The Rev. Schaeffer resided in Carlisle.

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In 1795, because of the growth of the congregations in membership and the demand for more frequent services here and in the neighborhood, the Lutherans felt that the union should be dissolved. Accordingly, in that year, the Rev. Henry Moeller accepted a call to become pastor of the Lutherans in and around Harrisburg, and under him began our distinctive congregational life. He was succeeded in 1803 by the Rev. John D. Peterson, who served until 1812.

The Rev. Frederick C. Schaeffer was appointed minister in 1812 for Harrisburg, Middletown, Shoop's and Wenrick's Churches. The English language was first used in the services by Mr. Schaeffer. It is interesting to note that this change was made to attract and hold the younger people.

In 1813 the present site of the church was purchased, and on June 22, 1814, the corner stone was laid. On October 1, 1815, about one month after the arrival of a new pastor, the Rev. George Lochman, the new church was dedicated and the two congregations which for 27 years had occupied the one church on Third Street, in fraternal harmony, were separated.

In 1816 the congregation sold all their interest in the old church and lot for \$1000.

In 1818 an organ was purchased. In 1819 the Rev. Lochman formed the first Sunday School in Harrisburg by organizing the younger people of several congregations. The sessions were first held in a small room of what is now 302 Market Street, afterward in the old Court House, and then in a building on Walnut Street opposite the jail. When it was found expedient for each of the congregations to establish a school of its own, our Sunday School Association, with the sanction of the vestry, erected in 1822, and in large part paid for a







Built 1814—Destroyed by Fire 1838

two-story brick school house on the vacant lot by the church. In 1827 the Rev. Geo. Lochman was succeeded by his son, Augustus H. Lochman, who served the congregation for nine years. In 1829 a steeple was erected on the church and a bell placed therein. The congregation prospered and in 1836 became independent and self-supporting by separating from Shoop's, Wenrich's and Middletown's congregations. The Rev. Samuel Sprecher became minister in this year after being assured that his limited knowledge of German would not interfere with his work.

One of the most memorable events during the pastorate of the Rev. Sprecher was the total destruction by fire of both the Sunday School building and the Church on Sunday evening October 21, 1838. The following morning the pastor and the vestry, with many of the congregation present, gathered about the still smoking ruins and promptly resolved to rebuild Zion Church. Liberal subscriptions were taken on the spot and contributions came from friends far and near. On November 10, 1839, the new Zion was dedicated. It was 64 feet front by 84 feet deep, with lecture room and Sunday school rooms in the basement; was built of brick, covered with composition, painted white, and within the cupola two bells were placed. It was in this new building, before its consecration, that the National Convention





Our Church in 1839

of the Whig Party was held which nominated Gen. W. H. Harrison for President and John Tyler for Vice-President of the United States.

The Rev. Sprecher was followed by the Rev. Charles W. Schaeffer in July 1841. It was during his pastorate that St. Michael's German Lutheran Church was organized, on January 8, 1843. In July 1849 the Rev. Charles A. Hay succeeded the Rev. Schaeffer.

The need of a second English Lutheran Church was apparent, and a mission Sunday School was opened in a rented building on the corner of State and Cowden Streets in February 1858. In March 1859 the lot on the corner of State and Fourth Streets was leased for five years and a small wooden church was built. On September 13, 1860, a congregation of sixty-four members was organized, sixty-one of whom had been regularly released from Zion for this purpose. This is now Messiah Lutheran Church. In December 1865, the Rev. Hay was succeeded by the Rev. George F. Stelling.

In the years 1867-68 the church edifice was remodeled and enlarged at an expense of nearly forty thousand dollars, which included a new organ and the chimes of eleven bells. In November 1867 our Sunday School Association organized a Mission in a small school house





on the Jonestown Road. A lot of ground 100 by 105 feet, at the corner of Fifteenth and Shoop Streets, was conveyed to the trustees of Zion by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Shoop, and a congregation of thirty-five members was organized under the name of Memorial Lutheran Church on February 25, 1872. In 1886 the officers of Zion conveyed this property to the Memorial Church for a consideration of one dollar.

In September 1875 the Rev. Stelling was succeeded by the Rev. Joel Swartz.

A movement was originated in the Zion Sunday School Association in February 1875 looking to the establishment of a mission school in West Harrisburg. Eleven years of earnest, self-sacrificing labor on the part of the members of Zion particularly interested in this project resulted in the establishment of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, on the corner of Green and Cumberland Streets. The cornerstone of the first building was laid August 23, 1885 and the church was dedicated March 21, 1886.

In February 1881 the Rev. Swartz was succeeded by the Rev. Albert H. Studebaker. In December 1887 the Rev. Studebaker was succeeded by the Rev. D. M. Gilbert.

Due to the interest and liberality of Joseph F. Young, a faithful member, our congregation started Trinity Mission on South Ninth Street, November 11, 1889. The congregation was organized on May 17, 1891.

In 1906 the Rev. D. M. Gilbert was succeeded by the Rev. S. Winfield Herman.





# *Latest History*

By The Rev. Stewart Winfield Herman, D. D.

The foregoing historical facts have been collated from the historical sermons of the Rev. C. W. Schaeffer, D. D., and the Rev. D. M. Gilbert, D. D., upon the occasions in 1845 and 1895 of the celebrations of the 50th and 100th anniversaries of the separate founding of Zion and published in the Volume—*The History of Zion*, edited by the Rev. D. M. Gilbert, D. D.

It becomes our privilege to make a brief digest of some of the facts of interest leading up to the 150th Anniversary of the separate organization of Zion, culminating in the Anniversary year of 1945, and the Reformation Day Observance with the Rev. Franklin Clark Fry, D. D., LL. D., President of the United Lutheran Church in America, as guest preacher and with official representatives of Zion's daughter, grand-daughter, great grand-daughter and sister congregations in attendance.

The first half century in Zion was engaged in the laying of foundations for the effective preaching of the Word of God and ministering to the souls of those connected with the congregation. At the end of this period the congregation was occupying its third new building and was actively promoting its religious educational work, being enabled thus to release its energies into the second half century with an emphasis upon evangelism and further congregational activities, e. g., organization of missionary societies and young folks' work. With such a background the third half century was begun. Following the longest pastorate up to that time in Zion, that of Pastor Gilbert 1887-1905, the full time pastorate of the Rev. S. Winfield Herman, D. D., began in 1906. He served as Junior Pastor 1904-1905. The objectives were set at the first vestry meeting, and have been striven toward during the larger part of this last half-century, viz.:

(a) The close adherence to the simple preaching of the whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Divine Scriptures and confessed in the creeds of our Church. **Zion is known for her confession of the Christian Faith.**

(b) The determination to make the ministry of Zion as effective as possible through the encouragement of the Pastor and laity of the congregation to be actively associated with the various Boards of the Church, and with all community interests compatible with the ideas and work of the Church. Owing to this emphasis the Pastor and lay-



men and laywomen of Zion have been elected or appointed to a goodly number of the Boards and Committees of the General Synod, United Lutheran Church, local Synods and diversified community organizations. **Zion is known for her workers and her work.**

(c) The need for Christian Education was recognized in Zion in the establishment in September 1819 of the first modern type Sunday School. Now, however, it was planned to organize and equip the School upon the latest approved educational plans and methods. This was accomplished through leadership training and the renovation of rooms, and the building of the Sunday School Annex and the Intermediate Department Building. Zion has an unique catechetical instruction course that is integrated with all the teaching in the Children's Division of the School. **Zion teaches both young and aged the Christian way of life.**

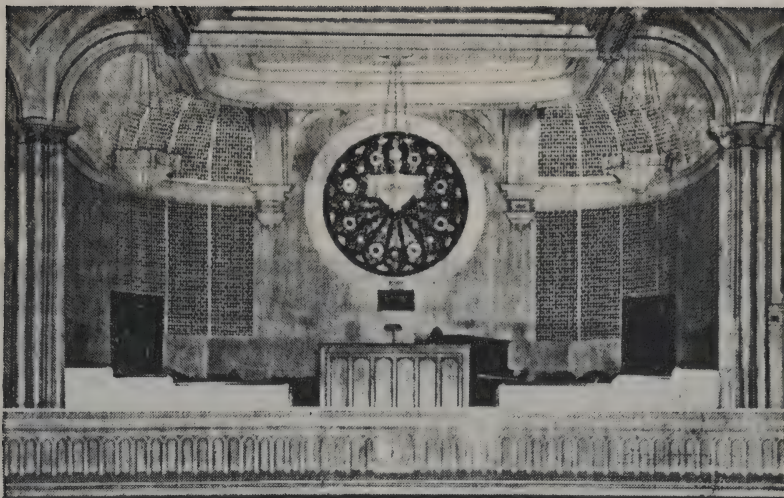
(d) It was urged that the spirit of Zion ought to be expressed in a warmhearted welcome and a sympathetic understanding of the needs of all classes of members and friends. To be winsome and gracious in the spirit of our Lord was to be the constant aim of members of Zion in their homes, in shop and business places as well as in the church. The motto, "The Church with a Heart in the Heart of Harrisburg," was capable of demonstration. **Zion is loved because she loves people.**

(e) "A Church open seven days a week" was made possible in the heart of the city. Members and friends can drop in to meditate, to rest, to worship, whenever downtown, in the beauty of holiness; where the lovely memorial windows are always preaching day and night. All these beautiful windows have been placed in this half-century. **Zion is a beautiful church.**

(f) Probably the point of greatest emphasis was the proposal to make Zion a great "Missionary Church." The determination that the ministry of Zion should be proclaiming this Gospel everywhere twenty-four hours a day caused the following Missionaries to be supported: Dr. and Mrs. Roy Dunkleberger in India, Dr. and Mrs. J. K. Linn in Japan, Dr. and Mrs. J. F. Krueger and Dr. and Mrs. L. Grady Cooper in China, together with Native Pastors Moses and Luke in India and scores of proteges in our various fields. During this period twelve sons of Zion have entered the ministry. "What hath God wrought." No doubt Zion's greatest work and greatest fruitage is in foreign fields.







Choir Loft, Organ and Dr. D. M. Gilbert Memorial Window

Thus far in this Pastorate 5,919 souls have been received into the congregation. Total funds raised have been \$1,607,086, of which \$724,184 was for benevolences. The 150th Anniversary Fund of \$100,000, for the renovation of the church property and the erection and furnishing of the building units for congregational organizations, is a tribute to the generosity of the loyal members and a prophecy, in the light of the faith and good works of Zion in the past, of a future of achievement in the next half-century, which will dim the glories of the past and reflect the goodness and presence of our Lord Jesus, Whom alone Zion worships and serves.

As an evidence of her faith in her future, Zion has placed the third organ in her history to assist in the worship services. Always known for the quality of her musical programs, under able direction and with gifted voices, she is prepared now to continue to serve those **who love beautiful music**. The renovation of the Choir Loft, the electrification of the tower chimes, and the placing of the four manuel organ were accomplished at a cost of \$48,000.

To any who believe and confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who are willing to join in a Christian program for the congregation, the community and the world, Zion offers a church home and an opportunity to unite with co-workers in the **establishment of the Kingdom of God**.

(Shortly after having written the above historical sketch, the Rev. Dr. Herman died suddenly on December 16, 1947.)







Console of New Organ





Zion Lutheran Church, 1947



















